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**ABSTRACT OF THE INVENTION**

Novel vaccines for use against  $\beta$ -hemolytic *Streptococcus* colonization or infection are disclosed. The vaccines contain an immunogenic amount of a variant of streptococcal C5a peptidase (SCP). Also disclosed is a method of  
5 protecting a susceptible mammal against  $\beta$ -hemolytic *Streptococcus* colonization or infection by administering such a vaccine. Enzymatically inactive SCP, and polynucleotides encoding these SCP proteins are further disclosed.

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